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SUBJ: MOZAMBIKAN POLICE ON "MAXIMUM ALERT" FOR HUMAN
TRAFFICKING CRIMES

REF: MAPUTO 242

11. (U) During the April 10 opening session of the Interior Ministry's sixteenth annual meeting, Minister Jose Pacheco identified cross-border trafficking-in-persons as a criminal focus area in which the Mozambican police are on "maximum alert." He said police were working to neutralize and punish organized human trafficking networks and, to that end, were concentrating law enforcement efforts in key border areas, particularly on the South African frontiers. Minister Pacheco highlighted the recent arrests of six human traffickers in mid-February (reftel) as a successful example of the "maximum alert" policy, which also covers trafficking of narcotics and illicit firearms.

12. (U) Other important political players are citing trafficking as a growing problem as well. In his April 11 three-hour annual report to the legislature, Attorney General Joaquim Madeira said that cross-border trafficking of Mozambican minors persists for the purposes of forced labor and sexual exploitation, and even acknowledged that it in some cases occurs with the knowledge and/or connivance of relatives. He said that trafficking is an act that clashes with the international conventions to which Mozambique is a signatory, and mentioned the need to strengthen existing legislation for prevention and prosecution.

13. (U) COMMENT: While it's true that human trafficking is an issue relatively new in the Mozambican political consciousness, the above-cited occasions mark the first time both a Mozambican interior minister and an attorney general have publicly acknowledged trafficking-in-persons as a national problem and have cited it as a law enforcement priority. The obstacle that continues to hamper Mozambique's fight against human trafficking is a critical lack of resources, the result of competing national priorities which include eliminating absolute poverty, providing sufficient classrooms, restoring degraded infrastructure, and, most serious, battling the ever-growing HIV /AIDS pandemic. Fortunately, a strong and relatively well-organized group of civil society organizations is pushing hard on human trafficking, spurring government players to do more.